

Letter and enclosure to John D. Wright, May 6, 1916, with transcript

COPY May 6, 1916. Mr. Jno. D. Wright, #1 Mt. Morris Park, West, New York City, N. Y.,
My dear Mr. Wright:—

After mailing my letter of Wednesday it occurred to me that possibly the object which you wished to accomplish could best be secured by the adoption of two resolutions; one in the nature of a declaration of the Association's attitude in regard to oral segregation, without specifying in the resolution the manner of the Association's activity in regard thereto. As for example.

“Resolved that as it is the judgment of the Board of Directors of the A.A.P.T.S.D. that an exclusive speech atmosphere, other things being equal, is best adopted to the highest mastery of speech and lip reading by deaf children we hereby strongly urge upon the members of the Association and the Profession at large the very great desirability of establishing a segregated oral department in every school for the deaf.”

My idea would be to make public use of a resolution drawn somewhat after the foregoing and then to adopt another resolution to control our manner of action, such resolution not to be made public. This latter resolution might be framed as follows:

“Be it resolved that the Association should use every reasonable endeavor, through the medium of official publication, writings, utterances and influence to bring about the establishment of a segregated oral department in every school for the deaf.”

This latter resolution would have special application to the Superintendent of the Volta Bureau and the Editor of the Volta Review, and pertaining entirely to the Association's private management could be modified and changed at any time without involving

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any change whatever in our declaration of policy 2 contained in the first resolution. Furthermore, the adoption of this plan would not publicly bind the Association to a greater activity in regard to oral segregation than it is now committed to the promotion of the use of Visible Speech in regard to which the Association now hold a generous endowment.

Upon the receipt of your reply to my suggestions I will forward copies of our communication to Dr. Bell for his judgment and comments before I send the resolutions to the other members for approval.

Please understand me that it is not my purpose to formulate for you the resolutions which you wish to offer. Having, however, been connected with the Association as a member of the Board for upwards to twenty three years and well remembering the exceedingly great caution which was exercised in formulating our "Bill of Rights" as set forth in our Constitution I have been moved to make the suggestions submitted to you.

With kind regards, I am Very truly yours, EL:WGL COPY

Just at the end of the meeting of the directors of the A.A.T.P.T.S.T.D. held in Washington on April 22nd., when all other business had been disposed of Mr. Wright asked those present to discuss a matter in which he is very much interested. This is the improvement of speech teaching conditions in Combined schools by the establishment of an oral department, small or large, wholly segregated from that part of the school in which the sign language or finger spelling is employed. He said he believed this would do more than any other one thing to help the Combined schools to do the most efficient oral work. He expressed the belief that a large number of the superintendents of Combined schools would gladly cooperate in securing this if they could obtain the necessary appropriations and sanction from their legislatures and boards of directors. He asked especially to hear from those directors present who are superintendents of Combined schools. In order to bring the matter before the meeting, he offered the following resolution:

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Be it RESOLVED

That the Directors and members of this Association should use their best endeavors, through the medium of their publications, writings, utterances and influence to bring about the establishment of a segregated oral department in every school for the deaf.

Subsequently, by correspondence, the President of the Board suggested the following amended form of resolution, which he said he would favor:

Be it resolved that this Association should use every reasonable endeavor, through the medium of publications, writings, official utterances and influence to bring about the establishment of a segregated oral department in every school for the deaf.

This has been accepted by Mr. Wright without hesitation. The matter seems of importance to the Board, and it is desired to submit this amended resolution to the Directors by correspondence, and ask them to vote upon it, sending their replies to the President at their earliest convenience.

Mr. Wright stated that the superintendents of all schools for the deaf had for years shown an earnest desire to do efficient oral work with all of their pupils who, in their judgment, were fitted to benefit by it. He said they seemed to have all reached the conclusion that the lack of a speech environment was one of the principal difficulties, if not the principal difficulty, against which they were obliged to contend. He suggested that in every school for the deaf there were pupils who had become deaf after language and speech had been acquired; others that were not totally deaf, but possessed some imperfect speech and the speech habit, acquired through partial hearing; and still others who, though totally deaf from early infancy, yet (in the opinion of the superintendent) possessed the qualities of mind which enabled them to profit satisfactorily by purely oral instruction. These three groups of pupils, present in every school, should, in Mr. Wright's opinion, form

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the segregated oral department, and could be efficiently educated without recourse to the sign language or finger spelling, and should be so taught if they are to reach the highest efficiency in speech and speech reading of which each pupil is capable. COPY